



From the Executive Director:

Sharing a Decade of Lessons

Since 1998 Cal-PASS has helped schools, colleges, and universities use student outcome information to make critical decisions about improving student success and transition. After 11 years of guiding this process, several recurring themes have come to light:

First, student outcome information needs to be relevant to the people reviewing it. Statewide rates of student success mean little to teachers and faculty members because the information is too far removed from their practice and their students. This information needs to relate to the work they do, the people they influence, and the ideals they feel passionate about.

Second, examining data in a collaborative learning environment can lead to positive changes in practice without the specter of an institution feeling judged. When teachers, faculty, and staff enter into collaborative conversations focusing on students, the playing field is leveled and the blame game is off the table. Kay McClenney said it best: “We use data to move from a culture of blame to a culture of wonder. We *wonder* why something is — or is not — occurring rather than ascribing blame. This wonder leads us to ask better questions and attempts to get at the causes of behavior.”

Third, leaders, faculty, and administrators must have the courage to let information be transparent. When leaders are willing to share outcomes, colleagues are more willing to come together to address the issues that are raised. This does not mean that an institution should report all of their student outcomes to everyone. It does mean that the relevant teachers, faculty, and staff need to know what the information says and identify ways to address the issues.

Finally, learning and improvement only happen when the organization regularly monitors student outcome information. This monitoring has to be built into

continued on page 3

ACCESS Initiative in Full Swing

Over the past 10 months, 26 Cal-PASS Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) have adopted the principles of the new Aligning Curricula and Career Education for Student Success (ACCESS) initiative, engaging in a collaborative effort to define and align math and English curricula throughout high school and college. Representatives from each PLC convened for two days in June to define and draft entrance and exit competencies for ACCESS coursework spanning 11th grade through transfer-level coursework in English and math at the post-secondary level. Faculty shared example assessments/assignments for exit competencies and took a first look at how the curricula aligned from one course to the next. According to ACCESS’ independent evaluator, participants at the June meeting demonstrated an overwhelming commitment to their work on this new initiative.

The PLCs are presently reviewing and refining the summer meeting’s competency work. By the end of 2009, the faculty will post all of their revisions to an online ACCESS forum. In addition, Cal-PASS has been gathering assignments from Career and Technical Education (CTE) faculty related to the math and English coursework that the PLCs are discussing. By January 2010, Cal-PASS will

continued on page 3

In This Issue...

Spotlight on Data	2
Ensuring Data Quality	2
HS Students Get Hands-On at Universities	3
Thank You, Foundations	4
Effective Change	4
How to Reach Us	5

Spotlight on Data:

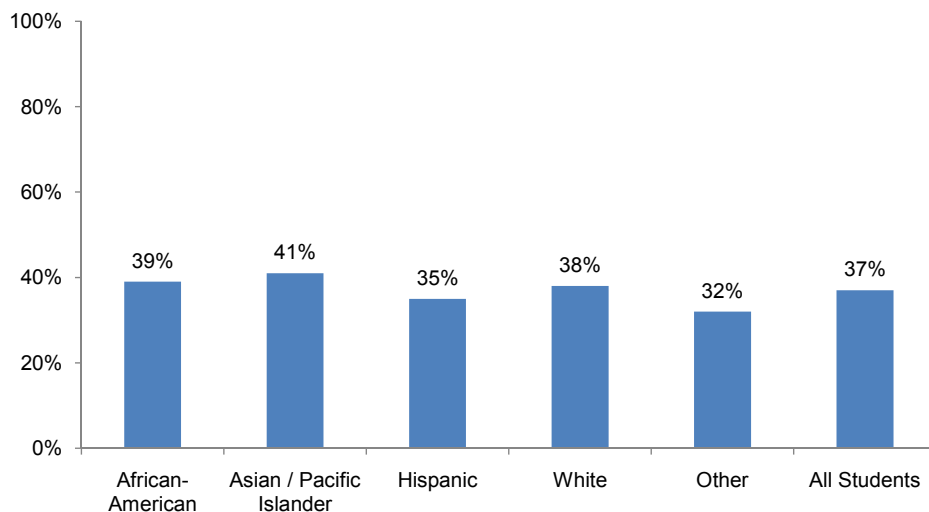
Student EAP Follow-Through Revealed

The Early Assessment Program for College Readiness (EAP) provides information that is useful for helping students successfully transition from high school to college, particularly in the areas of math and English. The EAP accomplishes this by providing feedback to high school juniors about their readiness for college in English and math through a set of optional test questions on their 11th grade California Standards Test (CST).

In 2009, 74,464 California high school juniors — nearly 44 percent of those who took the test — received an EAP score of “Ready for College — Conditional” in math. This designation is defined by the California State University system as: “Your test score demonstrated readiness at this point in time on the EAP math test. However, you will need to take the appropriate math or science course in your senior year to ensure that you continue to be ready.” Until Cal-PASS staff looked at the data this year, little was known about how many of these “Conditional” students acted on feedback and enrolled in math or eligible science courses during their senior year.

Cal-PASS staff conducted a preliminary estimate using the EAP test results from 2006–07 and high school course enrollments in 2007–08 as part of their *Measuring Success, Making Progress* report. This Hewlett Foundation-funded joint project, with partners MPR Associates, Inc., and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, was designed to provide educators and policymakers with data about student progression and achievement in high school and college. The section of the report on college preparation shows that about 37 percent of juniors who scored “Ready for College — Conditional”

continued on page 4



Percentage of Conditionally Ready Juniors in 2006–07 Who Completed the Required Math or Science Courses in Their Senior Year, by Ethnicity (N= 28,581).

Ensuring Data Quality

The Cal-PASS database currently contains more than 344 million student, course, and award records, and receives thousands of data files each year from its member school districts and colleges. With this kind of volume, how does Cal-PASS ensure data quality? “Success At Every Level” doesn’t just apply to students; it is reflected in the Information Technology department’s processes that result in sound products. Cal-PASS staff members address data quality at every step of the process.

Validation software: Before any data can be uploaded to the Cal-PASS database it must be validated locally, giving users the opportunity to correct errors and verify values prior to submission. Cal-PASS validation software evaluates the data against a set of rules and includes only the “approved” records in the output file. Each time a user accesses the software, the system checks for an updated version. This guarantees that users have the most up-to-date version.

Pre-submission analysis reports: These reports, which are automatically generated after the software validates the data, summarize the data that the user is submitting. These PDF documents include frequency distributions of values for each data element collected in both tabular and chart forms that are easy to print and save.

Help desk: Staffed by a Cal-PASS data analyst, the help desk can be reached during normal business hours by phone or e-mail for assistance with data validation, data submission, or interpreting the pre-submission analysis reports (see page 5 for contact information). Help desk staff document all

continued on page 5



High School Students Get Hands-On at University Research Labs

Contributors: Vic Chow, UC Davis Marine Biology Lab Director; Mark Niemann, Novato High School Science Teacher; Katheryn Horton, Cal-PASS Regional Coordinator, North Bay

This day at school was far from normal for Anna, a freshman at Novato High School, as she fastidiously sized invasive species at the UC Davis Bodega Bay Marine Laboratory. A few weeks earlier, she had been among flip-flop-wearing graduate students at Sonoma State University, experimenting with lasers at the University’s engineering lab.

Anna and 120 other high school students from Sonoma and Marin counties got a chance to view science through an interesting and fun lens last year thanks to a Cal-PASS science innovation called Science-A-Go-Go. For many of these students, it was their first visit to the marine lab on Bodega Bay or the Point Reyes geological site, or even to a university.

“The surprise outcome was the number of kids who were so taken by visiting a university,” said Mark Niemann, a science teacher from Novato High School. “Those of us who were planning the field experiences thought an engineering lab might be a bit dull compared to investigating oil-digging sites and sampling an area of the bay. But that was not at all the case. So many of these kids had never set foot on a college campus before and were awestruck.”

Science-A-Go-Go came to life after the Sonoma/Marin Professional Learning Council (PLC) — made up of science faculty from local high schools, Santa Rosa Junior College, Sonoma State University, and UC Davis — analyzed local student transition data regarding student interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors. The group kept coming back to students’ lack of exposure to and curiosity about science at a young age.

“Our group became aware that students will not be successful in science unless there is some kind of spark that makes it relevant and exciting,” said Vic Chow, director of the UC Davis Marine Biology Lab and a member of the PLC.

Science instructors in the PLC looked to a 2007 report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm: The Role of Community Colleges in Preparing STEM Professionals — Issues and Challenges* (Augustine and Rai), to investigate the shortage of STEM professionals in the United States. The main reason cited in the report is that “students don’t understand what the career opportunities are or what STEM careerists do.”

Armed with this research, the PLC began brainstorming ways to address this issue on a regional level. They pooled resources to create an intervention that would introduce young students to the real world of science.

continued on page 5

ACCESS, cont.

be able to share 100+ examples of CTE assignments with ACCESS PLCs. Through the rest of 2010, ACCESS PLCs will continue to develop English and math curricula guides that are based on the newly aligned, contextually relevant, and collaboratively developed curricula. These guides will allow educational institutions in every region of the state to easily apply the new competencies.

The ACCESS initiative is made possible through funding from William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Haas Jr. Foundation, and the Girard Foundation. For more information about ACCESS, contact Dr. Eden Dahlstrom at edahlstrom@calpass.org; (530) 204-7129.

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*Best wishes for a
wonderful
New Year*
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Lessons, cont.

existing systems, such as program review and accreditation. When teachers, faculty, and staff become regular consumers of information, they can modify practices where and when necessary.

While these lessons may seem like common sense, they are not always practiced. With the federal government signaling that they are serious about improvement, understanding and implementing good practices can bolster the use of data to improve student outcomes.



Spotlight, cont.

attempted and successfully completed appropriate math or science courses during their senior year (see figure on page 2). A majority of the “Conditional” students did not take another math or science course during their senior year despite the fact that they may have benefited from this additional coursework.

These findings are based on 28,581 students from 425 schools in 138 school districts located in 32 counties. This sample only includes Cal-PASS member schools and may not be representative of California as a whole. In addition, further work is needed to include students who chose an e-learning course or other alternative means to satisfy the CSU Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) requirements.

More information on the *Measuring Success, Making Progress* project will be available soon. Look for a link on the Cal-PASS Web site in December. For more information on required high school courses for high school juniors who score “Conditional” on their EAP math test, see www.csumathsuccess.org/hs_course_msw.

Thank You, Foundations

California foundations continue to be strong supporters of Cal-PASS and its mission to improve student achievement and transition across educational segments. With foundation funding accounting for more than half of the Cal-PASS total budget, the support of these private funders is invaluable and allows Cal-PASS staff to expand and enhance their work. Cal-PASS is indebted to these private funders for their continuing support. Current funders include:

- ***Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching***
- ***Girard Foundation***
- ***Haas Jr. Foundation***
- ***James Irvine Foundation***
- ***Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation***
- ***Stuart Foundation***
- ***Walter S. Johnson Foundation***
- ***William and Flora Hewlett Foundation***

Good Data and Analysis: Keys to Effective Change

Cal-PASS’ mission to improve student achievement across the state does not come easy. In low-performing schools, curriculum and instruction do not usually change unless teachers have the opportunity to meet and talk about their practice, using real data from their classrooms. Cal-PASS recently sat down with two high school administrators to discuss how Professional Learning Councils (PLCs) and quality data analysis can lead to practical strategies for implementing positive change in schools.

John Montgomery, assistant superintendent of instruction at Roseville Joint Union High School District, talked about the value of data that reflects current school-specific realities. “Teachers and administrators won’t develop a passion for changing their school if they are working with data that is out-of-date, vague, or not applicable to their classroom experiences.” Montgomery pointed out that even when faced with the quality data that Cal-PASS provides, not everyone in a school will see the urgency at first. Momentum builds when the individuals who understand the need for change unhesitatingly share their concerns about student performance. Their passion for positive change only becomes validated when they persist in their efforts.

Bob Collins, superintendent of Grossmont Union High School District, discussed the role of PLCs in improving teacher practice. Teachers are encouraged to explore effective teaching pedagogy when PLC members bring what they’ve learned back to their schools to share with their colleagues. When teachers continuously come together to talk about teaching, their curriculum becomes more consistent and they can encourage and sustain enthusiasm about students and their school.



Ensuring Data Quality, *cont.*

communication with users, assigning each service request a “trouble ticket” that staff monitor until the issue is resolved.

Instructional guides and videos: Customized by segment, user guides provide step-by-step instructions for several Cal-PASS data-related functions. They include screen shots to assist users with the validation software and submission Web site, as well as instructions on how to access online queries and downloads. With the advent of Cal-PASS’ new SMART Tool, these guides will soon be expanded. Cal-PASS staff has also created instructional videos that show users how to validate and submit data.

Post-submission analysis reports (in development): Beginning next year, users will receive these reports after they submit data to the database. These reports will compare current data with past submissions. A data analyst will consider any data points that fall outside of a prescribed range of acceptable values for possible inclusion in a data quality report that links to each of Cal-PASS’ online queries and data display tools. Also known as “caveats to the data,” researchers and faculty can refer to this list of known issues as they investigate and use the data. In another effort to verify data quality, research analysts run a series of queries against the data that they include in the post-submission analysis report.

Requests for resubmission: Cal-PASS staff occasionally identifies major data quality issues in a submitted report. When this happens, they ask the school district/college member to resubmit all or part of the data.

Hands-On at Research Labs, *cont.*

“We figured it would expose the kids to science role models and possible career paths,” said Niemann.

With a grant from Cal-PASS, science faculty from the PLC worked with high school teachers to develop lesson plans around the field experiences. They surveyed students before and after the field trips to gauge whether there was a shift in interest level about the sciences. These students were also flagged anonymously in the Cal-PASS database and will be tracked through their high school and college careers to see if this one intervention has any effect on their choice of majors.

Looking beyond this pilot Science-A-Go-Go program, the Sonoma/Marin Science PLC would like to work more broadly and reach for even younger students as they encourage excitement about the field of science. Elementary school teachers are now a part of the growing PLC to help identify science needs in elementary schools. One vision for this expanded program, now called the North Bay Science Ambassadors, includes a series of classroom and field science activities that college and high school science students will teach after they have received training. Lessons will include interrelated earth science, physics, chemistry, and biology strands, and will culminate in field experiences.

“This is a win-win program for so many,” said Chow. “It provides academic and career training for college and high school students while providing role models and model lessons for elementary school teachers.”

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